DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 182 394 UD 020 147

AUTHOR Gottfredson, Linda S.
TITLE Racial Differences in the Evolution of Educational and Occupational Aspirations.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Apr 79
CONTRACT 400-77-0054
NOTE 31p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, April, 1979).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Ability; *Academic Aspiration; *Achievement; Blacks; Caucasians; Longitudinal Studies; *Occupational Aspiration; *Racial Differences; Social Class; *Social Differences; *Socioeconomic Status

ABSTRACT

Nationally representative longitudinal data on 2548 white men and 822 black men aged 15-24 in 1966 were used to assess changes in aspirations and attainment between 1966 and 1971. Occupational as well as educational level was considered. Predictions that aspirations would be lowered when men failed to advance in educational level over a one year period and that they would increase on the average when men increased in educational level over a one year period were not borne out. There was little change and it occurred equally for all educational transition groups. When the men were classified according to three levels of ability and three levels of socioeconomic status, the following was observed: (1) low ability and low SES groups increased educational aspirations slightly over the five year period; (2) average differences between the SES and ability groups in aspiration and attainment levels were all large; (3) educational and occupational aspirations were higher among blacks than among whites of the same SES and ability level; (4) occupational attainments were slightly lower for blacks; and (5) the racial differences in apsirations, and particularly in attainments, were not large compared to the differences found by SES and ability. (Author/RLV)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

JAN 1 0 1980

ED182394

Racial Differences in the Evolution of Educational and Occupational Aspirations

Linda S. Gottfredson

Center for Social Organization of Schools

The Johns Hopkins University

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

L. S. Gottfredson
Center for Soc. Org. of Schools, Johns Hopkins Univ.

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

UD020147

Paper presented at the meeting the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, April 1979. This research was supported by contract NIE 400-77-0054. The results and opinions do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the National Institute of Education and no official endorsement should be inferred.

Racial Differences in the Evolution of

Educational and Occupational Aspirations

Abstract

Nationally representative longitudinal (Parnes et al, 1969) data on 2548 white men and 822 black men aged 15-24 in 1966 were used to assess changes in aspirations and attainment between 1966 and 1971. Occupational as well as educational level was considered. Changes in aspirations were used to indicate which educational transitions have the greatest impact upon career plans, and it was assumed that any larger changes occurring among blacks would indicate settings that pose particular problems for blacks' career development. Predictions were that aspirations would be lowered when men failed to advance in educational level over a one-year period and that they would increase on the average when men increased in educational level over a one-year period. These predictions were not borne out; there was little change and it occurred equally for all educational transition groups. When the men were classified according to three levels of ability and three levels of socioeconomic status, the following was observed. Low ability and low SES groups increased educational aspirations slightly over the five-year period. Average differences between the SES and ability groups in aspiration and attainment levels were all large and consistent, they existed among both younger and older men in both 1966 and 1971, and changes in either aspirations or attainments tended to be smaller than the differences among the ability and SES groups. Educational and occupational aspirations were higher among blacks than among whites of the same SES and ability level; occupational attainments were slightly lower for blacks. However, the pattern of SES and ability differences found among the whites was replicated among the blacks. The racial differences in aspirations--and particularly in attainments--were not large compared to the differences found by SES and ability. Because the

largest differences in aspirations and attainment appear to be associated with social class and measured ability rather than with race per se and because proportionately more blacks than whites are found in the lower SES and ability groups, the major conclusion is that class and not race per se may be the major barrier in the future to the socioeconomic advancement of blacks relative to whites. It also appears that the large differences between the SES and ability groups develop before men enter high school. Future research should focus on exactly what it is about early environments (and the social reinforcements which may continue into adulthood) that produces such large differences in aspirations and attainment by SES and measured ability level.

Racial Differences in the Evolution of Educational and Occupational Aspirations

People's educational and occupational aspirations can be seen as products of their social environments. Being products of those environments, aspirations can be used as barometers of the different environments that blacks and whites experience and as barometers of the changes in those climates over time. First I will say a little bit about what I think aspirations reflect and what we might be able to learn from them. Then I will describe how I attempted to use them to identify settings and processes that might hinder blacks in their pursuit of more education and better jobs. Finally, I will conclude by describing what I think may be the exclusionary processes of paramount importance to blacks in the coming decades.

Scientists, politicians, and laymen all take aspirations seriously, though they may disagree about what they mean. During the 1960's many people began to recognize the potentially explosive problem created because some social groups may be effectively blocked from fulfilling the American dream. A decade earlier a frequent question in sociological research (e.g., Rodman, 1963; Kahl, 1953; Empey, 1956; Rosen, 1959) had been to what extent do different social groups share common values, to what extent are they all able to meet common goals, and what negative consequences such as anomie or delinquency might be expected from either the differences in values or a gap between goals and attainments? In the last decade we have seen an increasing attention among sociologists to the relation of aspirations and expectations to educational and occupational attainment. Take for example the work of Sewell and Shah (1968a, 1968b) and of Kerckhoff (1974; Kerckhoff and Campbell, 1977) which examines the role of peers, teachers, and parents

on educational plans. Yet other segments of academe -- vocational psychologists, in particular -- have as their major concern understanding the development and implementation of aspirations for different fields of work.

But what do aspirations really reflect? Like any attitude item, we are not really sure what they mean and arguments about whether or not they reflect what people would really do given a chance, whether they are purely fanciful, and so on, illustrate this problem. These arguments and confusions arise because aspirations have at least two distinct components, both of which may vary systematically across individuals and over time. These two components are the desirability of different outcomes and an assessment of the probability that each of those outcomes can be obtained with some reasonable effort. Take occupations, for example. We can examine a person's aspirations <u>as if</u> he had made two assessments: (1) how much he would like each of the occupations, ranking them according to more and less desirable or satisfying and (2) his assessment of the probability that each of them is within his reach. The resulting "choice" of occupations could then be seen as some compromise between desirability and probability of occurrence. As the person ages and gets more experience we might expect the reality (the probability) factor to become relatively more important in affecting stated choices (Kerckhoff, 1974, 1977; Gottfredson, in press). Thus, when we use aspirations as a barometer of social conditions, we are measuring to some extent the effects of environments on both what people would like to do and what they think they think they actually can do. Any question which focuses a person's attention on the probability of actually getting his preferred choice, will result

in choices that look more "realistic" -- hence the commonly found differences when individuals are questioned about their expectations and plans rather than about their aspirations.

It is clear, however, that whatever we are measuring with aspirations and no matter how unrealistic we think they may be sometimes, we are measuring something that is intimately related to what people do eventually obtain (cf. Kerckhoff, 1974; Sewell and Shah, 1968a). In short, aspirations say something about the person's perception of self or of his environment that forecasts his fate quite well.

I began this research with several assumptions, one being that young people hold somewhat unrealistic educational and occupational aspirations (i.e., that aspirations reflect primarily the desirability of different options). But as youngsters age they begin to face or perceive more obstacles, they are better able to assess their opportunities, and therefore their aspirations become more "realistic." Thus, as youngsters age, their aspirations become increasingly sensitive barometers of the opportunities they perceive for themselves. If we further assume that the desirability of occupations is fairly constant after the elementary school years (and there <u>is</u> striking agreement in the ranking of occupations by all social groups which have ever been studied), it then seems reasonable to assume that if aspirations change -- either up or down -- over time, these changes reflect some alteration in people's assessments of their opportunities.

The strategy of this research was therefore to think of particular transition points from age 15 to 29 that might provide either positive or negative reinforcement of aspirations. I was interested in particular in racial differences that might occur at these transition points. For

example, if a student is not promoted in school or if he drops out, does his aspiration fall and does it fall more if he is black? Do blacks become increasingly discouraged (or less encouraged) about their opportunities compared to whites as they enter and proceed through college? Also, when blacks change their aspirations, do they adjust them in ways (e.g., towards different sorts of occupations) different than do whites? The object was to discern when and where blacks might need reinforcement of their aspirations or the provision of more opportunity in order to maintain their promotion through the systems of education and work. The data used here can provide no direct evidence about what it is about those settings that is important, only that they might be especially important for blacks.

Previous research has focussed on differences in aspirations among age, race, social class, and ability groups. It has not examined changes in aspirations for the same people over time. This research examines actual changes among men aged 15 to 24 in 1966 and explores the following questions.

(1) How much change in aspirations is there over a five-year period?

(2) Are the changes associated with educational and occupational experiences?

(3) Are the changes related to social background?

(4) Are the changes different for blacks than for whites?

Method

Data

Data on a nationally representative sample of men aged 14 to 24 in 1966 were obtained from the National Longitudinal Survey of the Labor Market Experience of Young Men (Parnes et al., 1969). The men were interviewed every year for over five years, and the surveys provide extensive data on the educational and occupational aspirations and experiences in each of those years. The men were not surveyed during the years they were in military service. This study uses data from the survey years 1966 and 1971. Analyses are based on data from 2,548 white men and 822 black men, though the sample size varies for the different analyses performed because ability data were not available for approximately one third of the men.

Aspirations. Aspirations were obtained by the following two questions. How much education would you like to get? What kind of work would you like to be doing when you are 30 years old? Educational aspirations are expressed as years of education and occupational aspirations in terms of Duncan SEI scores (Duncan, 1961).

Attainment. Educational attainment is measured as the number of years completed, and occupational attainment as the Duncan SEI score of the last job held. Thus occupational attainment does not necessarily refer to the current year if the man was either unemployed or out of the labor force.

SES background. SES background was measured by father's occupational status when the respondent was 14 years old. Men were then classified into three groups according to their father's status: low (Duncan SEI scores of 14 or below), moderate (15-29), and high (30 and above). It should

be noted that these divisions were made on the basis of sample size and many of the occupations classified here as high in status are not necessarily widely considered highly desirable. The low SES fathers include primarily laborers and some operatives and service workers; the moderate SES fathers include most operatives and perhaps half of the craftsmen; the high SES fathers include the rest of the craftsmen and almost all the sales and clerical workers, managers, and professionals.

Ability. Ability test scores from high school were available for many of the men. The scores were transformed into stanines, and for the analyses reported here, men were further grouped into three broad levels of ability. Once again, the groups were created with sample sizes in mind so the high ability group actually corresponds roughly to IQ levels of 100 and above and therefore includes all men "above average." No inferences are made about whether these scores reflect native ability. They could at the very least, however, be considered measures of reading level.

Age cohort. Two age groups are examined separately in all the analyses: men aged 15-18 in 1966 and men 19-24 in 1966. In 1971 these two groups of men were aged 20-23 and 24-29, respectively. The youngest age group includes primarily men of high school age in 1966, and the latter group includes primarily men of post-high school age in 1966. It is important to keep in mind that these men have been exposed to different events and have experienced the same events at different stages in their lives because they were born in different years. The older group was born in the years 1941 to 1947, they were age 18 (an age when many were leaving high school) in the years 1960 to 1965, and they are now aged 32 to 37. The younger men were born between 1948 and 1951, were age 18 in the years 1966 to 1969, and are now aged 28 to 31. In summary, the oldest group could

be characterized as men born during the second world war, who were probably leaving high school during the early years of the civil rights movement, and who are now in their mid-thirties. The younger men are baby boom babies who experienced the later years of the civil rights movement while still in school, and who are now in their late twenties.

When comparing results of this study with those of others, it is important to remember that these men were born later than men in most other widely used national surveys of young men. For example, the youngest men included in the first Occupational Changes in a Generation survey (Blau and Duncan, 1967) were 25 to 34 in 1962 and were born in 1937, five years before the oldest men examined in this study. The second OCG survey (Featherman and Hauser, 1976) includes primarily men who were born earlier than those included here, though there is some overlap. The men studied in the National Longitudinal Survey of 1972 high school seniors (Thomas, Alexander, and Eckland, 1979), on the other hand, are generally younger than those included here.

Analyses

All analyses presented here were performed separately for blacks and whites and for the two age cohorts. In several analyses the men were also classified according to three levels of SES background and three levels of ability. Aspirations and attainments in 1971 as well as 1966 are examined, thereby providing evidence about changes occurring over a five year period in early career.

Two limitations should be noted. First, the sample sizes vary according to the analysis considered because more data were missing for occupational status, ability, and SES background than for educational

aspirations and attainments. Therefore the different analyses do not deal with exactly the same groups of men. Second, the number of blacks in some of the analyses is quite small.

Results

The first table provides some indication of the amount of change in both educational aspirations and attainment that occurred between 1966 and 1971 for men in the sample. Table 1 shows the percentage of men in the different race-age groups who aspired to and who had actually obtained different educational levels -- 12 years of education, 14 years, and so on -- in the two years. The table shows several things which would be expected: younger cohorts of men have higher aspirations than do older ones and actual attainments increase over the five year period. The first finding is to be expected because of rising secular trends in the level of education (Hauser and Featherman, 1976) and the latter because the men are still young and pursuing their education. Other findings were not so predictable.

Insert Table 1 About Here

First, all groups of men raised their aspirations over the five years. This too may reflect the secular trends in educational levels, but it could also partly reflect a developmental process whereby the more education a person gets, the higher he sets his goals. It could also reflect an upsurge in interest in education coinciding with the tremendous expansion of higher education in the 1960's.

The more interesting comparisons involve race, particularly the older

black men. The percentage of older black men aspiring in 1966 to 11 or fewer years of education is overwhelming -- over 43% said they wanted this little education. In the other groups, at most only 16% said they want this low level of schooling, and in 1971 the younger blacks have already achieved more than the older blacks said they even wanted in 1966. By 1971, however, these older black men have changed their aspirations considerably and look much more like the younger blacks in their aspirations. However, their actual attainments have hardly changed at all. More than half still have fewer than 12 years of education.

Table 1 reflects the secular trends in rising educational levels and the rising aspirations may partly reflect this. The system of higher education expanded greatly during the 1960's and no doubt most people -- regardless of race -- saw both more opportunities for education and also actually obtained it. One other historical effect, one which is peculiar to blacks, however, also is suggested. Those blacks who were in school throughout most of the 1960's civil rights era -- the younger group -- may have been more strongly affected or else affected at an earlier age by the opening up of new opportunities for blacks (or at least by the perception of them) than were the older blacks who may have already been locked into a pattern of low attainment. In short, the pattern of aspirations and attainments among the blacks over the five year periods seems to suggest a change in the larger social environment which had an enormous effect on black perceptions and pursuit of opportunity -- although not all groups were able to benefit from it.

Particular educational experiences. What about the effects of more particular settings that I suggested as potentially important sites of influence?

I will briefly mention but not present the results of some analyses which looked for changes in aspirations associated with dropping out versus advancing in school. If individuals lower their aspirations after discontinuing their education, or if they raise them when exposed to new opportunities through advancement, or if there are racial differences in the changes, then my tables did not show this. Instead, they reflected great stability over a one year period for all the educational transitions (or non-transitions) examined. No particular group seemed to lower or raise its aspirations for education over the one year period. Aspirations for jobs did seem to decrease somewhat but they did so in the same manner for all groups. Thus, while not ruling out the importance of these transition points, the results suggested looking elsewhere for the important influences on educational and occupational aspirations. In particular, they suggested looking to social background.

Social background. Tables 2 and 3 provide information about who holds the highest aspirations and who changes their aspirations most. Table 2 shows trends over the five years in educational aspirations and attainment for men of different ability levels. Table 3 shows comparable results for occupational status. Results were also obtained for men of different SES levels within the different ability groupings and are shown in appendix Tables I through IV. Although attainments and aspirations in the different SES groups differ, they show the same trends by race as do Tables 2 and 3, so only the latter two tables will be discussed.

Mean years of education and mean occupational status are shown for the different groups of men. The tables replicate findings from previous studies. First, aspirations among blacks are higher than among comparable

Insert Tables 2 and 3 About Here

whites. Not all studies find higher aspirations for blacks, but most do (Gottfredson, 1978; Cosby, 1971; Kuvlesky, Wright, and Juarez, 1971). Second, there are big differences in aspirations for men from different ability and SES levels. This is also well documented (e.g., Sewell and Shah, 1968a, 1968b). Third, actual attainments do not differ much by race for men with comparable backgrounds. Research on older cohorts of men (e.g., Blau and Duncan, 1967) find larger apparent racial differences in attainment processes, but studies of more recent cohorts (e.g., Hogan and Featherman, 1977) suggest that black (at least Northern black) attainment processes have become quite similar to those of whites.

The tables show other interesting results though. Looking at the results for educational aspirations and attainment shown in Table 2, it is apparent that it is the least advantaged men -- low ability whites and low and moderate ability blacks -- who changed their educational aspirations most. They increased their aspirations on the average by half a year to more than a whole year, these increases perhaps reflecting a rising floor on what is considered an acceptable minimum level of education. The more advantaged groups did not change their aspirations at all on the average. Individual men in the more advantaged groups no doubt changed their aspirations -- some up and some down -- but as a group they seem to reflect a steady environment. Returning again to the changes that were found across the five years, however, they do not appear large compared to initial differences between the groups which existed in 1966. In general, it appears that reinforcements received by men during the five years tended to change the aspirations of less advantaged groups to some

extent, but they were largely consistent with differences in reinforcements which the different SES-ability groups received in earlier environments. This is true for both blacks and whites.

Furthermore, if one looks at actual attainments, aspirations tend to be higher than actual attainments by a fairly constant amount across all groups. It is as if all groups had set their targets a little high but within a reasonable distance of what they thought possible to reach. The gap between goals and attainment is somewhat higher for blacks than for whites, largely because blacks set their aspirations higher. The goals-attainment gap is between one and two years for whites in all ability groups but a bit higher for blacks. It is also interesting to note that the higher ability groups attain more by 1971 than the lower ability men even aspired to in either year.

In summary, although all men appear to set higher aspirations for themselves than they eventually fulfill, their aspirations nevertheless strongly reflect differences in social position that eventually reveal themselves in differences in actual attainment as well. And the races differ in their aspirations, but do not clearly differ in how social background has differentiated them according to either aspirations or attainment.

The results for occupational status in Table 3 are in many respects the same as for education: blacks have higher aspirations but do not have clearly lower attainments holding background constant, this resulting in a larger gap between aspirations and attainment for blacks than for whites. In other respects, the results for occupation differ from those for education. Whereas educational aspirations were maintained or increased, occupational aspirations are lowered over the five year period for three of

the four groups studied. The drop in aspirations is much the same regardless of ability or race (excluding the older blacks). This drop occurred despite the fact that all groups of men increased their occupational status over the five year period.

Several explanations could account for the differences in results for educational and occupational aspirations -- the latter being lowered but the former not. By the time men are 15, they have had a decade of experience in schools and of reinforcement (positive or negative) for their performance in school. In contrast, these men have had much less experience in the labor market and thus their occupational aspirations have been subjected to less reality testing than have their educational plans. It is also true that it is easier to get more education than to get a better job, persistence counting less and competition more for occupational advancement than for educational advancement. Finally, the differing form of the educational and occupational aspiration items could conceivably account for the difference in trends. The occupation question, by asking for aspirations for age 30, may have forced respondents to take reality (i.e., the probability of getting any given job) into account more than did the education question which did not specify an age.

It is not possible to say as much about cohort differences in level of occupational aspirations as it was about cohort differences in educational aspirations because a different proportion of the two age groups are represented in Table 3. (Fewer of the young than the older men have had any job experience by 1966, aspirations were included only for those men who reported any job experience, and so a smaller proportion of the younger men are included in the Table.) Despite this limitation, differences between the younger and older blacks are large enough and consistent enough

with Table 1 to suggest a cohort difference among the blacks. Only the low and moderate ability groups will be considered, because there are so few cases in the high ability group. Older blacks do not lower their occupational aspirations, in contrast to the three other groups of men. These were also the men who raised their educational aspirations most in Tables 1 and 2. Looking at their attainments, though, they are not as far ahead of the younger blacks in status as are older white men of younger ones. They are also further behind whites of the same age than are younger blacks compared to younger whites. As was suggested earlier, this group appears to have had their aspirations strongly reinforced, but perhaps the new opportunities they might have perceived were experienced too late in their occupational careers to do them much good.

Discussion

To summarize, if we consider aspirations a barometer of social environments -- particularly in conjunction with actual attainments -- the following conclusions might be drawn about the effects of different environments.

(1) The cohort differences and the actual increases in educational aspirations both suggest that secular changes in educational levels and the expansion of postsecondary schools in the 1960's have created a greater sense of opportunity (or necessity) for obtaining more education.

(2) Although these effects have been registered in the aspirations of both younger and -- particularly -- for older blacks, they have to be experienced early (before men are effectively committed to their educational and occupational careers) to be translated into attainments.

(3) The decreases in occupational aspirations over time for most

groups suggests that men 15-29 meet obstacles in the labor market which cause them to reassess the probability that they will achieve their earlier goals. However, men who could be expected to meet the most obstacles -- for example, men of low ability -- have set their initial goals lower and so do not adjust their aspirations to a greater degree than do more advantaged men. Whatever the consequences of decreasing aspirations, men from different groups seem to share them equally.

(4) Differences in aspirations and attainments are large and consistent across different SES and ability groups. They exist among the youngest as well as the oldest men examined here, they exist in both years, and changes in either aspirations or attainments tend to be smaller than the initial differences.

(5) Educational and occupational aspirations are definitely higher among blacks than among whites of the same SES and ability level, and occupational attainments may be only somewhat lower for blacks. However, the pattern of SES and ability differences found among the whites is replicated among the blacks. The races appear to share the same effects of SES and ability distinctions.

(6) The racial differences in aspirations -- and particularly in attainments -- are not large compared to the differences found by SES and ability. The cohort differences among the blacks suggest that this may be a recent phenomenon. The implication of this is explored further below.

In short, a picture emerges of a system of differentiation determined strongly by SES and ability. Whatever the differences are in the environments people of different SES and ability levels experience, they are enormously influential. They either affect the individual permanently early in life or else they provide very consistent reinforcement from

early in life. Some secular changes in the general social climate affect many or all groups, although some groups may be more affected than others. For example, the low ability groups raised their aspirations the most during the five-year period studied. Such widespread changes do not appear to appreciably alter the distance between different SES groups, however. And whatever general process is responsible for the lowering of occupational aspirations from ages 15 to 29, its effect is small in magnitude compared to the influences which shaped earlier aspirations and which created enormous differences between SES groups to begin with.

The cohort differences among the blacks suggest that specific historical events such as the civil rights movement may have a more selective effect on some social groups and therefore operate to decrease the distance between some social groups.

Before I go any further, I should mention several conclusions that readers may be tempted to draw but which are not warranted on the basis of my results. The first unwarranted conclusion is that because the most important causes of educational and occupational handicaps may be experienced early in life and that people are born into these environments, we should focus exclusively on children or possibly there is nothing that can be done about it because we cannot change their parents. The second unwarranted conclusion is that race per se is no longer a handicap.

The two conclusions I want to draw are as follows. First, although SES and ability are enormously important and although one is by and large born into them, it is not necessarily true that "nothing can be done about it." The problem is that we do not know what to do about it. Social background differences are differences in social environments, including differences in values, access to information, financial resources,

potential role models, job contacts, and much else. These are all things which can conceivably be altered.

Second, social background is becoming more important compared to race (cf. Wilson, 1978) in determining the fate of blacks. As racism recedes, social class differences loom large. If all blacks were suddenly to be treated exactly like whites of similar SES background and ability, most blacks would still face enormous handicaps. The last table presented here--Table 4--is a stark reminder of this. When classified by both SES and ability, one-third of the whites are in the high-SES-high-ability group and only about 4 percent are in the low-ability-low-SES group. It is exactly the reverse for blacks. Even if we assume that most blacks are misclassified by ability level, there are still large differences in SES--and as the Appendix tables show, SES also affects both aspirations and attainments.

Insert Table 4 About Here

Racism is surely still a problem. But the problem for us in the future is related to ability and SES. We had better learn exactly what it is about these distinctions that is important--it is probably much more than just poverty--in order to decrease racial differences in the future. And because basic changes in what we consider to be meritocratic might be necessary in order to effect any significant decrease in racial differences in attainment, we had better be prepared to make some very hard choices in the future.

I did not begin my research with this problem in mind and my data are surely not the best to support my conclusions. But the inescapable message of these results is that important exclusionary processes are often related to social class as well as race.

References

Blau, Peter M. and Otis D. Duncan. 1967. The American Occupational Structure. New York: Wiley.

Cosby, Arthur. 1971. "Black-White Differences in Aspirations Among Deep South High School Students," Journal of Negro Education, 40(1): 17-21.

Duncan, O.D. 1961. "A Socioeconomic Index for all Occupations." Pp. 109-137 in A. J. Reiss, Jr. (Ed.) Occupations and Social Status. New York: Free Press.

Empey, LaMar T. 1956. "Social Class and Occupational Aspiration: A Comparison of Absolute and Relative Measurement," American Sociological Review, 21:703-709.

Featherman, David L. and Robert M. Hauser. 1976. "Changes in the Socioeconomic Stratification of the Races, 1962-73," American Journal of Sociology, 82:621-651.

Gottfredson, Linda S. In press. "Aspiration-Job Match: Age Trends in a Large Nationally-Representative Sample of Young White Men," Journal of Counseling Psychology.

Gottfredson, Linda S. 1978. "Race and Sex Differences in Occupational Aspirations: Their Development and Consequences for Occupational Segregation." Report No. 254. Baltimore, MD, Center for Social Organization of Schools.

Hauser, Robert M. and David L. Featherman. 1976. "Equality of Schooling: Trends and Prospects," Sociology of Education, 49(April): 99-120.

Hogan, Dennis P. and David L. Featherman. 1977. "Racial Stratification and Socioeconomic Change in the American North and South," American Journal of Sociology, 83(1): 100-126.

Kahl, Joseph A. 1953. "Educational and Occupational Aspirations of 'Common Man' Boys," Harvard Educational Review, 23: 186-203.

Kerckhoff, Alan C. 1974. Ambition and Attainment. A Study of Four Samples of American Boys. The Arnold and Caroline Rose Monograph Series in Sociology. Washington, D. C.: American Sociological Association.

Kerckhoff, Alan C. 1977. "The Realism of Educational Ambitions in England and the United States," American Sociological Review, 42(August): 563-571.

Kerckhoff, Alan C. and Richard T. Campbell. 1977. "Race and Social Status Differences in the Explanation of Educational Ambition," Social Forces, 55(3): 701-714.

Kuvlesky, William P., David E. Wright, and Rumaldo Z. Juarez. 1971. "Status Projections and Ethnicity: A Comparison of Mexican American, Negro, and Anglo Youth," Journal of Vocational Behavior, 1: 137-151.

Parnes, Herbert S. Robert C. Miljus, Ruth S. Spitz and Associates. 1969. Career Thresholds: A Longitudinal Study of the Educational and Labor Market Experience of Male Youth 14 to 24 Years of Age, Vol. I. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University, Center for Human Resource Research.

Rodman, Hyman. 1963. "The Lower-Class Value Stretch," Social Forces, 42: 205-215.

Rosen, Bernard C. 1959. "Race, Ethnicity, and the Achievement Syndrome," American Sociological Review, 24: 47-60.

Rosenberg, Morris and Roberta G. Simmons. 1971. Black and White Self-Esteem: The Urban School Child. The Arnold and Caroline Rose Monograph Series in Sociology. Washington, D.C.: American Sociological Association.

Sewell, William H. and Vimal P. Shah. 1968a. "Parents' Education and Children's Educational Aspirations and Achievements," American Sociological Review, 33(2): 191-209.

Sewell, William H. and Vimal P. Shah. 1968b. "Social Class, Parental Encouragement, and Educational Aspirations," American Journal of Sociology, 73: 559-572.

Thomas, Gail E., Karl L. Alexander, and Bruce K. Eckland. 1979. "Access to Higher Education: The Importance of Race, Sex, Social Class, and Academic Credentials," School Review, 87: 133-156.

Wilson, William Julius. 1978. The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Table 1

Percentages of Men Aspiring to Different Levels of Education and of Men Actually Attaining Different Levels in 1966 and 1971: Two Cohorts of Men by Race

Race	Age in 1966	Years of education	% Aspiring to each educational level		% Attaining each educational level	
			1966	1971	1966	1971
Whites	15-18	0-11	7.3	5.2	73.1	14.6
		12	25.9	27.0	21.2	37.4
		13[a]	--	--	5.4	12.1
		14	9.4	13.6	0.2	10.7
		15[a]	--	--	--	10.5
		16	36.9	27.0	--	10.9
		17+	20.7	27.0	--	3.6
		(N)	(1244)		(1243)	
	19-24	0-11	16.4	9.5	22.5	20.9
		12	32.1	29.6	38.4	33.9
		13	--	--	11.3	7.3
		14	2.7	10.0	8.8	6.1
		15	--	--	7.2	5.1
		16	22.1	25.0	7.4	14.3
		17+	27.0	26.1	4.3	12.5
		(N)	(1304)		(1303)	
Blacks	15-18	0-11	15.7	12.5	86.1	37.5
		12	37.7	31.7	12.4	42.2
		13	--	--	1.1	5.8
		14	8.8	11.7	0.4	7.3
		15	--	--	--	4.7
		16	30.2	29.3	--	2.4
		17+	7.7	14.8	--	0.2
		(N)	(467)		(467)	
	19-24	0-11	43.4	17.7	53.5	52.4
		12	32.3	43.8	32.4	29.6
		13	--	--	3.9	4.2
		14	1.1	10.1	5.4	3.1
		15	--	--	2.3	1.7
		16	12.9	15.4	1.7	6.5
		17+	10.4	12.9	0.8	2.6
		(N)	(356)		(355)	

[a]When educational aspirations were coded, 13 and 15 years were not used as coding categories.

Table 2

Mean Years of Education Aspired to and Actually Obtained in 1966 and 1971 by Two Cohorts of Men: By Race and Ability Level

Race	Ability	Age in 1966	Years Desired		Years Attained		(N)
			1966	1971	1966	1971	
Whites	Low	15-18	12.9	13.2	10.2	11.6	(107)
		19-24	12.2	12.7	11.4	11.6	(124)
	Mod	15-18	14.3	14.3	10.8	12.6	(357)
		19-24	13.9	14.1	12.4	12.9	(376)
	High	15-18	15.8	15.8	10.9	14.0	(510)
		19-24	15.8	15.8	13.7	14.8	(452)
	Total	15-18	14.9	15.0	10.8	13.3	(974)
		19-24	14.5	14.7	12.9	13.6	(952)
Blacks	Low	15-18	13.5	14.0	10.3	11.8	(103)
		19-24	12.2	13.4	11.4	11.5	(76)
	Mod	15-18	14.5	15.3	10.4	12.6	(77)
		19-24	13.8	14.5	12.3	12.9	(43)
	High	15-18	16.3	16.4	11.1	13.8	(20)
		19-24	16.2	15.9	13.6	14.4	(17)
	Total	15-18	14.1	14.7	10.4	12.3	(200)
		19-24	13.2	13.4	12.0	12.3	(136)

Table 3

Mean Occupational Status Aspired to and Actually Obtained in 1966 and 1971 by Two Cohorts of Men: By Race and Ability Level

Race	Ability	Age in 1966	Status Desired		Status Obtained		(N)
			1966	1971	1966	1971	
Whites	Low	15-18	39.6	35.7	17.0	22.1	(70)
		19-24	39.7	35.5	23.5	30.4	(92)
	Mod	15-18	49.9	47.6	19.1	32.3	(237)
		19-24	51.0	47.2	32.8	41.0	(317)
	High	15-18	63.4	60.2	22.7	40.1	(311)
		19-24	64.6	61.3	41.6	58.9	(369)
	Total	15-18	55.5	52.6	20.7	35.0	(618)
		19-24	56.1	52.5	35.8	48.2	(778)
Blacks	Low	15-18	45.6	41.0	14.5	20.7	(65)
		19-24	40.0	40.2	19.7	26.9	(49)
	Mod	15-18	59.4	59.6	15.9	30.0	(45)
		19-24	56.7	57.0	28.7	34.3	(35)
	High	15-18	72.4	60.5	31.9	52.3	(11)
		19-24	67.7	60.6	30.9	48.2	(15)
	Total	15-18	52.6	49.7	16.6	27.0	(121)
		19-24	50.1	49.2	24.6	32.8	(99)

Table 4

Percentage of Men in Different SES and Ability Groups: By Race and Age

Race	Ability	Age in 1966	SES			
			Low	Mod	High	Total
White	Low	15-18	3.1	4.0	3.9	11.0
		19-24	4.4	4.0	4.6	13.0
	Mod	15-18	6.9	12.2	17.6	36.7
		19-24	8.8	12.0	18.7	39.5
	High	15-18	6.9	12.5	33.0	52.4
		19-24	7.0	9.9	30.6	47.5
	Total	15-18	16.9	28.7	54.5	(N = 974)
		19-24	20.2	25.9	53.9	(N = 952)
Black	Low	15-18	30.0	18.0	3.5	52.0
		19-24	26.5	19.9	9.6	55.9
	Mod	15-18	19.5	16.0	3.0	38.5
		19-24	14.7	13.2	3.7	31.6
	High	15-18	4.5	2.0	3.5	10.0
		19-24	6.6	2.9	2.9	12.5
	Total	15-18	54.0	36.0	10.0	(N = 200)
		19-24	47.8	36.0	16.2	(N = 136)

Appendix Table I

Mean Years of Education Desired and Years Actually Attained in 1966 and in 1971: By Race, SES, and Ability

Men Aged 15-18

Ability	SES	Aspiration 1966	Aspiration 1971	Attainment 1966	Attainment 1971	(N)
Whites						
lo	Total	12.9	13.2	10.2	11.6	(107)
	lo	12.7	12.6	10.2	11.6	(30)
	mo	12.9	13.2	10.0	11.5	(39)
	hi	13.2	13.7	10.3	11.8	(38)
mo	Total	14.3	14.3	10.8	12.6	(357)
	lo	13.5	13.5	10.7	12.3	(67)
	mo	13.9	13.8	10.7	12.3	(119)
	hi	14.8	14.8	10.9	12.9	(171)
hi	Total	15.8	15.8	10.9	14.0	(510)
	lo	14.8	14.8	10.7	13.3	(67)
	mo	15.5	15.5	10.7	13.6	(122)
	hi	16.1	16.2	11.0	14.4	(321)
TOTAL		14.9	15.0	10.8	13.3	(974)
Blacks						
lo	Total	13.5	14.0	10.3	11.8	(103)
	lo	13.6	13.9	10.3	11.7	(60)
	mo	13.0	13.9	10.3	11.7	(36)
	hi	--	--	--	--	(7)
mo	Total	14.5	15.3	10.4	12.6	(77)
	lo	14.2	14.8	10.2	12.6	(39)
	mo	14.6	16.0	10.7	12.7	(32)
	hi	--	--	--	--	(6)
hi	Total	16.3	16.4	11.1	13.8	(20)
	lo	--	--	--	--	(9)
	mo	--	--	--	--	(4)
	hi	--	--	--	--	(7)
TOTAL		14.1	14.7	10.4	12.3	(200)

Appendix Table II

Mean Years of Education Desired and Years Actually Attained in 1966 and in 1971: By Race, SES, and Ability

Men Aged 19-24

Ability	SES	Aspiration 1966	Aspiration 1971	Attainment 1966	Attainment 1971	(N)
Whites						
lo	Total	12.2	12.7	11.4	11.6	(124)
	lo	11.5	12.0	11.0	11.1	(42)
	mo	12.0	12.7	11.2	11.4	(38)
	hi	13.1	13.2	11.9	12.2	(44)
mo	Total	13.9	14.1	12.4	12.9	(376)
	lo	13.3	13.3	12.3	12.5	(84)
	mo	13.3	13.8	12.0	12.4	(114)
	hi	14.5	14.6	12.8	13.4	(178)
hi	Total	15.8	15.8	13.7	14.8	(452)
	lo	15.3	15.5	13.4	14.3	(67)
	mo	15.2	15.1	13.0	14.1	(94)
	hi	16.0	16.1	14.0	15.1	(291)
TOTAL		14.5	14.7	12.9	13.6	(952)
Blacks						
lo	Total	12.2	13.4	11.4	11.5	(76)
	lo	11.8	13.0	11.2	11.2	(36)
	mo	12.0	13.4	11.2	11.3	(27)
	hi	--	--	--	--	(13)
mo	Total	13.8	14.5	12.3	12.9	(43)
	lo	13.4	14.8	12.0	12.7	(20)
	mo	14.4	13.9	12.5	13.0	(18)
	hi	--	--	--	--	(5)
hi	Total	16.2	15.9	13.6	14.4	(17)
	lo	--	--	--	--	(9)
	mo	--	--	--	--	(4)
	hi	--	--	--	--	(4)
TOTAL		13.2	13.4	12.0	12.3	(136)

Appendix Table III

Mean Status of Job Desired and Status of Job Actually Attained in 1966 and 1971: By Race, SES, and Ability

Men Aged 15-18

Ability	SES	Aspiration 1966	Aspiration 1971	Attainment 1966	Attainment 1971	(N)
Whites						
lo	Total	39.6	35.7	17.0	22.1	(70)
	lo	29.9	31.7	15.4	22.1	(22)
	mo	43.5	35.2	16.8	19.2	(24)
	hi	44.5	39.8	18.7	25.0	(24)
mo	Total	49.9	47.6	19.1	32.3	(237)
	lo	42.6	44.1	16.2	33.2	(46)
	mo	46.1	44.1	17.4	28.8	(76)
	hi	55.4	51.4	21.4	34.2	(115)
hi	Total	63.4	60.2	22.7	40.1	(311)
	lo	49.3	45.6	14.0	25.7	(39)
	mo	60.9	59.1	21.0	40.1	(77)
	hi	67.2	63.5	25.1	43.0	(195)
TOTAL		55.5	52.6	20.7	35.1	(618)
Blacks						
lo	Total	45.6	41.0	14.5	20.7	(65)
	lo	43.5	41.4	15.8	19.7	(39)
	mo	41.6	36.1	12.9	21.6	(21)
	hi	--	--	--	--	(5)
mo	Total	59.4	59.6	15.9	30.0	(45)
	lo	51.1	50.7	12.4	23.7	(22)
	mo	64.5	67.7	19.6	35.8	(19)
	hi	--	--	--	--	(4)
hi	Total	72.4	60.5	31.9	52.3	(11)
	lo	--	--	--	--	(3)
	mo	--	--	--	--	(3)
	hi	--	--	--	--	(5)
TOTAL		52.6	49.7	16.6	27.0	(121)

Appendix Table IV

Mean Status of Job Desired and Status of Job Actually Attained in 1966 and 1971: By Race, SES, and Ability

Men Aged 19-24

Ability	SES	Aspiration 1966	Aspiration 1971	Attainment 1966	Attainment 1971	(N)
Whites						
lo	Total	39.7	35.5	23.5	30.4	(92)
	lo	35.3	24.8	22.4	24.1	(32)
	mo	37.1	37.5	21.1	33.4	(26)
	hi	45.9	44.0	26.2	33.9	(34)
mo	Total	51.0	47.2	32.8	41.0	(317)
	lo	37.9	36.0	27.5	31.7	(71)
	mo	49.5	44.5	30.6	37.5	(93)
	hi	57.9	54.0	36.5	47.4	(153)
hi	Total	64.6	61.3	41.6	58.9	(369)
	lo	56.1	57.1	38.3	52.0	(54)
	mo	62.3	57.7	32.8	51.9	(71)
	hi	67.1	63.2	44.9	62.5	(244)
TOTAL		56.1	52.5	35.8	48.2	(778)
Blacks						
lo	Total	40.0	40.2	19.7	26.9	(49)
	lo	36.8	36.1	18.7	26.6	(26)
	mo	40.4	46.8	18.1	22.6	(14)
	hi	--	--	--	--	(9)
mo	Total	56.7	57.0	28.7	34.3	(35)
	lo	57.6	51.0	22.2	31.8	(16)
	mo	53.5	59.6	28.3	34.7	(14)
	hi	--	--	--	--	(5)
hi	Total	67.7	60.6	30.9	48.2	(15)
	lo	--	--	--	--	(8)
	mo	--	--	--	--	(4)
	hi	--	--	--	--	(3)
TOTAL		50.1	49.2	24.6	32.8	(99)